Fall 12-8-2015

The Interaction of Community Size and Perceived Local Political Efficacy Among Low-Income Individuals

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ABSTRACT

As the world's population continues to urbanize, urban studies are increasingly important. Studying the social science behind the rise of the city and its effect on various social phenomena should be a priority for scholars in the field of politics, sociology, and communication, because of the reasonable assumption that the environment of the city alters the way that a person engages people and systems within the city. This is especially true for peripheral and marginalized populations that often lack access to the social institutions necessary to improve their livelihoods. Using Diffusion of Innovation and urban studies theories of Anomie, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, and Mechanical and Organic Solidarity as a beginning theory base, this research studies the role of the city and perceptions of community size in developing local political efficacy. Participants from cities of different sizes (Abilene, Texas and Dallas, Texas) were surveyed on their perceptions of community size, levels of urbanization, and their political efficacy to determine the role that urbanization, city size, and perception plays in shaping political efficacy. The results from this study suggest that neither the city, nor the perceptions of its size and urbanization have a significant relationship with local political efficacy, but age, race, religion, and income all appear to be accurate predictors of political efficacy.

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Communication

By

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November 2015

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION, RATIONALE, AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The communication between politicians and their constituents is key to formulating policies that coincide with the wishes of those that elect these representatives to office. However, political efficacy is a key aspect of ensuring that the people elected are chosen by an electorate that sees the political process as accessible and capable of bettering their livelihood. Without a politically efficacious population, voting rates may lower, political participation may lag, or politics may be manipulated by certain individuals against the will of a government's constituents themselves.

This is especially the case in the instance of local governments, both in large and small cities. A municipal government's decisions are a major factor in the everyday lives of its constituents, from public transportation, to zoning laws, and even to the implementation of social service programs. This makes research into the communication between local governments and the people incredibly important, and it raises a number of different questions. Is there a significant difference in local political efficacy for urban low-income persons based on city size and demographics? Do political communication strategies differ in their effectiveness based on community size and demographics? How does political communication with persons in poverty differ between rural and urban areas? These examples stimulate foundational research linking systems to behaviors which, in fact, is the point of the present study.

Literature Review

Research analyzing the relative effectiveness of local political communication and outreach between different populations is limited. Most research into political communication looks at the growth of new media, emerging information abundance in political communication, and its effect on the general populace (Blumer & Kavanagh, 1999; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001). Research usually centers instead on national media outlets during Presidential or other national campaigns (Denver & Hands, 1997; Froehlich & Rüdiger, 2006; Rucinski & Salmon, 1990). For instance, McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy's (1999) research on mass media and interpersonal discussion in local political participation found that television news had no direct impact on institutionalized political participation, but that community integration and forum participation orienting voters towards the larger community positively affected the participation in local political institutions. However important this research on communication strategies and relative effectiveness for local governments may be, this research does not seem to compare rural and urban areas, nor does it analyze the effectiveness of communication strategies based on geographic location (specifically large urban/small city/rural areas).

The little research on political communication in urban and rural areas has focused less on issues of transparency for marginalized populations, and more on the way technology continues to change the deliberation process in local governments. Lin and Geertman's (2015) research into collaborative governance in the emerging "smart city" of the 21st century suggests an effective method of political communication and governance for persons living in the modern-day city, but does not assess the potential

problems that "smart governance" may pose for persons without access to technology that makes urban planning and governance more collaborative in the technological age. This research does take steps towards increasing transparency by introducing different techniques that may increase this transparency, although these issues do not target issues of transparency for the urban poor, nor do they address governmental transparency issues for persons living outside the new and improved "smart city" – populations that live in less populous areas and may not benefit from the luxuries provided to those living in more densely populated areas, such as Level A MSAs. Therefore, the "consensus building" that Lin and Geertman (2015) reference is more difficult for those living outside the large city and for those living in the city but without access to the transparency offered by techniques of smart governance.

In short, this abbreviated sample of the effects of community size on individual or communal activity is embryonic. Thus, researchers in these related areas can turn to established theories to facilitate explanation, such as Diffusion of Innovations, Anomie, and Organic Solidarity perspectives.

Diffusion of Innovation

Diffusion research is the method that ideas and innovations are distributed within and among societies. According to Rogers (2003), it is "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (p. 5). Biesenbender and Tosun (2014) defined diffusion as "the socially mediated spread of policies across and within political systems" and includes communication and learning processes across and within populations of adopters" (p. 425). Through the use of bidirectional communication, diffusion occurs (or fails to

occur) between two groups, causing them to adopt new ideas (or fail to). According to Rogers (2003), "diffusion is a type of social change" meaning that "alteration occurs in the structure and function of a social system" (p. 6). But what makes these structures more apt to change? What makes diffusion more possible in a community or its structures?

How do structures like local politics make change possible, and how do they encourage spontaneous and calculated diffusion of innovations? Structures can either inhibit or enable patterns of diffusion. According to Rogers (2003), "structure gives regularity and stability to human behavior in a system; it allows one to predict behavior with some degree of accuracy. Thus, structure represents a type of information, in that it decreases uncertainty" (p. 24). The structure as a key aspect of diffusion, and social structure or the "social relationships among the members of a system" can "facilitate or impede the diffusion of innovations" (Rogers, 2003, pp. 24-25).

This research analyzes the effect that community size has on feelings of efficacy and the interaction between low-income persons and their local/municipal governments. Rogers' (2003) Diffusion theory presents the effect that social network size and community factors have on an individual's ability to informally influence other attitudes or behaviors "in a desired way with relative frequency," a phenomenon he calls "opinion leadership" (p. 300). This opinion leadership can be explained using the "two-step flow model" suggesting that traditional views of the mass media and its influence and power are flawed, and that the communication process between groups in social networks may be a multistage and multifaceted communication process, functioning differently in "an individual's innovation-decision process" (Rogers, 2003, p. 304).

Understanding the interaction between groups and the diffusion of ideas and powers among those groups can be further understood by the "degree to which a pair of individuals are similar", a phenomena Rogers (2003) calls homophily. According to Tarde (as cited in Rogers, 2003), "social relations . . . are much closer between individuals who resemble each other in occupation and education," and Rogers (2003) argued that these homogeneous groups that communicate with one another prevent the spread of ideas vertically, slowing down diffusion within a system (p. 64; p. 307). This lack of interaction between different groups could help explain structural barriers that limit the political efficacy of low-income groups, who may lack access to communicative interaction with groups in higher socioeconomic groups that may have more efficacy in the political system. However, when networks and groups of people are more heterogeneous, Rogers (2003) argued that individuals are able to interact with individuals of higher socioeconomic status, education, and media exposure, which may increase levels of efficacy. This may be the case with groups that gather the attention of their local elected officials, who have more access to instruments of change than those groups would have without that interaction (p. 308).

In a way, city government officials may act in a certain capacity as "opinion leaders." An ideal elected municipal government official, after all, would meet Rogers' (2003) characteristics of decisions makers, including adequate external communication, accessibility to their followers (or constituents in this instance), socioeconomic status, and innovativeness (pp. 316-318). City government officials' ability to empower their more vulnerable populations are dependent on these factors; however, the effect that community size and immediacy has on that relationship may have an effect on the

efficacy of that official's constituents. The importance of external communication and immediacy in a larger community may require more action on behalf of the leader towards that leader's constituency, though the homophily of low-income and disenfranchised populations could have a negative effect on that communication.

Much of the separation between these constituents and their local politician or efficacious action in the political system may be dependent on the structures of their community. According to Rogers (2003), formal and informal structures have a significant effect on the "communication flows in a system," making the diffusion of information and efficacy more or less difficult for a community or the members of that network (p. 24). Communication structures develop patterns in behavior for the members of that community, positively or negatively affecting the individual behaviors of those individual members of that structure. Attitudes towards voting, making political change, and habits of political involvement, therefore, can depend on the communications structures' patterns that develop within a community.

According to Rogers (2003), socioeconomic status has a strong relationship with access to change agents, making change and innovation in communities dependent a lot on the access that individuals in that community have on their socioeconomic status (p. 159). Concerning the diffusion of innovation and a comparison of high and low innovative localities, Walker, Avellaneda, and Berry (2011) found that external pressures seem to be strong indicators of adoption in low innovation areas, simultaneously remarking that information accessibility could be a good indicator of innovation diffusion within communities and organizations. Similarly, Biesenbender and Tosun (2014) claimed that information and education are key to the diffusion of ideas within

developing or low-innovation communities. Biesenbender and Tosun (2014) also remarked that policy diffusion is dependent on "emulating" actors or communities that they view as "high innovators" (p. 425). According to Graham, Shipan, and Volden (2013) the importance of diffusion research in the political realm highlights the way that policies diffuse from one government to another, allowing for innovative policy decisions to move between communities. Low-income persons can also be negatively affected by change in other sectors of the environment. Rogers (2003) explains the phenomena this way:

> whether a new automobile such as the hybrid gas/electric car is designed as a low-priced sedan or as a high -end model determines whether middle-income or wealthy consumers will purchase it. Whether a research topic will benefit larger or smaller farmers largely determines who will eventually adopt the results of such research and the consequences of the research-based technological innovations (p. 159).

Applied to an urban political sphere, decisions such as zoning laws, permits, and other city investments may develop in ways that positively affect those with greater access to the ear of their local politicians, which may give them environmental privileges over low-income neighborhoods that don't have regular access to those systems. The decisions made by these politicians may therefore increase the inequality of the community. Decisions should be "developed and diffused in a way that leads to greater equality (rather than inequality) in their socioeconomic consequences" (Rogers, 2003, p. 159). But how do communities do this? Rogers (2003) suggested that "the answer lies in how socioeconomic status factors affect each stage in the innovation-development process" (p.

159). Analyzing the way that poverty and wealth affects the decision-making process of elected officials is the best way to ensure a more fair and equitable society.

Tönnies, Durkheim, and Theories of Urbanization

Anomie. One theory that can be used to explain differences in political efficacy for marginalized populations is the concept of anomie. According to Durkheim (1979) in his analysis of suicide trends in Europe, the concept of anomie suggests that

> no living being can be happy or even exist unless his [sic] needs are sufficiently proportioned to his [sic] needs. In other words if [a person's] needs require more than can be granted . . . they will be under continual friction and can only function painfully (p. 246).

In a state of anomie, "each in his [sic] sphere vaguely realizes the extreme limit set to his [sic] ambitions and aspires to nothing beyond;" therefore, by being "docile to collective authority" a person "feels that it is not well to ask more" (Durkheim, 1979, p. 250).

The interesting nature of anomie, Durkheim (1979) notes, is that it does not have the effect of producing despair or radically large notions of suicide, but rather that it acts as "a restraint in itself" (p. 254). The social conditions created by poverty create a complacent population, where "the less one has the less [one] is tempted to extend the needs of his [sic] needs indefinitely" (Durkheim, 1979, p. 254). Norasakkunkit and Uchida (2011) remarked that "those who are most affected by economic structural change . . . are likely to be segments of the population who move away from the center of society due to changing circumstances in their society" (p. 775). According to Dawson (2012), the constant presence and "continued dominance of economic anomie" explains the growing need for certain groups to "find the answer to the social question" (pp. 702-

703). The large segments of the population most affected by economic marginalization seek answers to those economic hardships in social ways, such as through avenues like the Occupy Movement. The effect of anomie on these groups, according to Norasakkunkit and Uchida (2011), is that these individuals move to the "periphery of society," where "they may no longer be under the pressure to internalize the dominant psychological orientations," but instead, "they may . . . maintain or develop more 'atypical' psychological tendencies" (p. 775)

Mechanical and Organic Solidarity. Along with Durkheim's concept of anomie and its relation to the development and permeation of social structures is the concept of Mechanical and Organic Solidarity. According to Thijssen (2012), the theory of solidarity stresses "the structural bases of solidarity as well as its evolution" with the growth and development of society (p. 455). As structures change, the way they interact with members of a society, as well as the way these members interact with each other, changes. Durkheim's analysis of the growth of the city and its relation to individual behavior can also be seen in the concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity. In Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893; 2005), he commented that as society grows, and humans become extensions of the societies they are part of, the connection "between the variations in happiness and the progress of the division of labour [sic]" disappears (p. 292). In fact, as a society grows, the study of that society shifts from the effect of that society on human happiness (Durkheim, 1893; 2005, p. 292).

Colombo, Mosso, and De Piccoli (2001), in their research on perceptions of community and participation in urban contexts, describe the homogeneity and voluntary relationships within community as concepts that do not take into account "the dynamic

and conflicting components that may be present at the level of the local community, in particular within urban contexts" (p. 462). In fact, according to Colombo and colleagues (2001), the view of community as an expression of relationship and solidarity fails to account for the dynamics and expressions of power present in even small communities.

These communities are key to identity formation and expression. According to Côté (1996), the structures and social interactions present in communities are expressions of "culture-identity" which are key to "identity capital" (p. 417). In fact, this interaction between community and identity occurs over three different levels: social structures (such as political and economic systems), daily interactions between members of a community, and personality (which includes concepts such as the ego and identity) (Cóté, 1996, p. 417). If community and structures are such an important aspect of identity, expression, and efficacy, this means that research examining these structures that make up a community are important to best maximize the efficacy of community members.

Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. Another theory that corresponds with Durkheim's concept of mechanical and organic solidarity is the concept of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. Tönnies (1887; 1940; 2005) in his description of the way that societies develop described Gemeinshaft as "community" or "association," which he distinguished from Gesellschaft, which he described as "society" or "public life" (p. 277) As a society grows, the associations between individuals in that society become less voluntary and more institutionalized. According to Tönnies (1887; 1940; 2005), Gesellschaft is "a mere coexistence of people independent of each other" making it different than the mechanical solidarity offered by Gemeinschaft associations (p. 277). Friendships and voluntary associations, being "the least organic and intrinsically necessary" relations between

persons, become more habitual and deterministic with the growth of the urban community, "in which nonrelated members and servants participate" (Tönnies, 1887; 1940; 2005, p. 278). Similarly, Greenfield (2013) claims "a key characteristic of Gesellschaft environments is that they are urban" and have characteristics of "commercial economies, complex technology, and high levels of wealth" (p. 1722).

Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft has been used as a means of developing "ecological and cultural change" in human organization, whereas "a key characteristic of Gemeinschaft environments is that they are rural . . . interrelating characteristics [such as] subsistence economies, simple technologies, and low levels of wealth" (Greenfield, 2013, p. 1722). Gesellschaft environments espouse "individualistic values, behavior, and psychology (centered on the independent and unique individual)" (p. 1722). According to Christenson (1984), "Gesellschaft describes an interactional system characterized by self-interest, competition, and negotiated accommodation" (p. 160). On the other hand, Christenson (1984) describes Gemeinschaft cultures as "binding," made up of "primary interactional relationships based on sentiment" (p. 160). Greenfield (2013) described the culture of Gemeinschaft as made up of "collectivistic values, behavior" and "centered on the interdependent family or community" (p. 1722).

Together, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft describe an ecological theory of behavior, which Greenfield (2013) remarked was a "view-point . . . that ecological factors operate synergistically and interactively, not in isolation" and that those factors alter cultural features and behavior of the residents of those various ecologies. Greenfield (2013) argued that the concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft have amalgamated into a theory of ecology in which the surroundings of individuals and the societies that they

participate affect their behavior, and that "ecological change will modify values, behaviors, and psychology" (p. 1723). Bonner (1998), discussed Tonnies' Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft as a theory of community that stratified two dialectical opposites, whereas "we have neither evolutionary (Darwin) nor revolutionary (Marx) development, but two sharply opposed social systems based on sharply opposing ways of life" (p. 173). Christenson (1984) claims that values associated with the social fabric of communities "are interrelated with daily living conditions" with "clear but moderate associations' (p. 167). Ecological theories center around the way that "ecological conditions drive cultural change" or, more specifically, the way that "urban-rural residence" has changed over time, and the effect of that shift on behaviors, attitudes, and ideas (Greenfield, 2013, p. 1725).

Some argue that the separation between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft is exaggerated, or even non-existent. According to Bell (1992), the "rural-urban continuum is relatively unimportant" (p. 78). However, what is especially important while analyzing the concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft is understanding the non-binary nature of the two ideas. Christenson (1984) argued that the two ideas should "avoid the polarity of the concepts along a single continuum that has plagued popular usage of the terms" (p. 168). Mellow (2005) also argued that though the terms Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft are often mistakenly presented as a dichotomy, instead, these terms do not exist as pure forms, but rather, that different localities respond differently from one another to Gemeinschaft or Gesellschaft culture. Greenfield (2013) echoed this thinking, remarking that the concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft "encompass multiple variables that operate synergistically and interactively" (p. 1725). Mellow (2005) suggested something

similar, that rural/urban spaces are not binaries, nor are they all encompassing, but rather that social organization of urban and rural spaces are harder to distinguish (p. 51). Greenfield (2013) uses the shift in urban definition as an example of the synergistic and interactive nature of the Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft continuum: "in 2000, the [operational definition of urban population] changed to densely settled territory, termed urbanized areas" and "urban clusters." In all definitions of "urban," the remaining population is considered rural" (p. 1725).

This argument indicates that the difference between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft communities and their residents is more apt to definitions and continuums. Abilene, though it is an "urban area" by definition, is further along the urban/rural continuum compared to cities like Dallas, Texas. Because of this, some Gesellschaft factors of Dallas may not exist at the same level in Abilene, and Abilene may maintain what Bell (1992) describes as the "ghost" of community (p. 79).

The Effects of Rural and Urban Areas

There has been little research analyzing the rural urban divide on issues like local politics. Though research over methods of measuring and monitoring urban and rural poor has developed, comparisons between the two populations are few and far between. Beaudoin and Thorson (2004), in their comparison of social capital between urban and rural communities, found that access to media is positively correlated to increases in social capital, which itself has a positive relationship with pro-social behavior, increasing the likelihood of an individual to volunteer and engage in civil society, and to a lesser extent the likelihood of a person to vote (although voting behavior was less tied to social capital/trust than other methods of civic engagement). In their comparison of rural and

urban populations, Beaudoin and Thorson (2004) found that although rural populations have higher levels of community trust than their urban counterparts, every other measure of social capital, including voting, was not significantly different, indicating that "the nature of life and culture in the rural and urban communities does not appear to alter the manner in which people interact and participate civically and socially," and that "urban communities are not as socially bleak and isolated" as some research suggests (p. 392).

There is some debate over the distinction between rural and urban poverty and whether or not we should distinguish the two. Some scholars believe that there is a difference between urban and rural poverty. Wratten (1995) disagreed, saying that the distinction between the two in policy making is not "useful" because "any such classification is intrinsically arbitrary" and that "determinants of urban and rural poverty are interlinked" (p. 33). On the other hand, Amis (1995), in his study of urban poverty and potential policy actions to combat the impacts of poverty, reported that studying urban poverty is key because poverty is centralizing within urban areas, arguing that urban poverty tends to be structural and is also considered "land-scarce poverty" meaning that people are in poverty because they lack access to land and employment at a level of proper subsistence (Amis, 1995, p. 148). The lack of access for urban populations to land or agricultural employment makes urban poverty unique. Similarly, Wilson and Aponte (1985) claimed that "to say that poverty has become increasingly urbanized is to note a remarkable change in the concentration of poor people in the United States in only slightly more than a decade" (p. 239). According to Wilson (2003), the origins of urban poverty come out of the early 1970s, when a "significant out-migration of working- and middle-class families from inner-city ghetto neighbourhoods [sic] combined with rising

numbers of poor residents due to escalating rates of joblessness [led to] heavy concentrations of ghetto poverty" (p. 1101). Small and Newman (2001) claim that "structural changes in the economy, such as a shift from manufacturing to service industries and the departure of low-skilled jobs from the urban centers, increased black joblessness in central city ghettos" which, when matched with the "flight of middle- and working-class blacks" created a new "underclass" of poor minority populations (p. 24). For today's inner city low-income, city life "features a group of poor residents whose major predicament is rising joblessness" while "contact between groups of different class and racial backgrounds has decreased" from the migration of middle-class and working-class white residents (Wilson, 2003, p. 1101).

Analyzing the gap between urban and rural areas centers around a politics of place (Masuda & Garvin, 2008). Politics and spaces act in tandem with one another in the formation of identity, and areas that are urban, rural, and in between are all key in understanding persons' access to agency. Understanding this agency "is best conceptualized through a historically contingent politics of place" (Masuda & Garvin, 2008, p. 122). According to Hoffman (2014), the subject living within urban spaces not only is a resident "located" in the urban, but also becomes "of" the urban, normalized through institutions of local governance key to the formulation of the urban identity (p. 1576). This finding explains why studies of local government are so important. They underscore the formulation of identity in the urban/rural spheres and serve instrumentally in engaging in civic life and expressing agency. There is especially a lack of study in the rural areas. Goodwin (1998) calls upon more research into the field of rural studies and local governance issues, claiming that there is a significant silence in rural studies over

the ways that rural areas are governed and the level of effectiveness of that governance.

This request for research is echoed by the growing need for research on issues facing smaller communities, especially rural poverty, which according to Tickamyer and Duncan (1990), like its urban counterpart, stems from a limited opportunity structure, "the outcome of both past social and economic development policies and current economic transformation" (p. 67). According to Wratten (1995), poverty has shifted, "becoming increasingly concentrated in urban settlements" and causing problems such as rising food prices, wage stagnation, and lack of access to necessary infrastructure and affordable housing (p. 11). This growth in urban poverty, however, does not separate the issues of rural and urban poverty, and Tacoli (2003) claims that dividing research into distinctly urban and distinctly rural areas "actually makes life more difficult for low-income groups" (p. 3).

The Effects of City Size on Politics

Research into the effect that city size has on feelings of trust and political competence among persons is varied. Rahn and Rudolph (2005), in their research into the effect of city size on political trust, found a negative correlation between the population of a city and the average political trust of its people (p. 548), though other factors affected this variation in political trust. Oliver (2000) found that levels of civic engagement and participation decreased in all areas when moving from smaller communities to larger communities, with one exception. The exception that he found was in local voting participation, which did not change significantly based on community size. Looking at participants' variations in confidence in their political competence, Finifter and Abramson (1975) argue that a significant difference in feelings of political confidence

based on large and small communities has a negligible effect in countries besides the United States (p. 192). This finding implies that those in smaller communities in the United States feel significantly more competent than their big city counterparts, but those in other countries, such as Mexico, Germany, Britain, and Italy, experienced little to no difference in comparative competence based on their community size.

It appears that the relationship between community size and political confidence, civic participation, and trust is complicated and at times spurious, or at least significantly affected by a number of different X factors. Eric Oliver (2000), in his study of the effect of city size and suburban growth on political participation, found that "lower participation rates in larger places must result from differences in resources, political interest, and/or patterns of political mobilization" (p. 368). Finifter and Abramson (1975) found that this relationship of lower civic participation in larger cities compared to smaller cities was complicated by education level and socioeconomic status, which diminished the reliability of a bivariate relationship between city size and civic participation. Similarly, regarding the effect that city size has on low-income persons, Rahn and Rudolph (2005) found that, though city size has an inverse effect on the political trust of its citizens, education has a positive, significant relationship on levels of political trust, compounding the effect of city size on levels of political trust.

Political Efficacy

Developing a measure for political efficacy is an area of contention for researchers that has developed since its inception in the 1950s by the Center for Political Study. Yeich and Levine (1994) define political efficacy as "a term used to represent an individual's perceived ability to participate in and influence the political system" (p.

259). Political efficacy measures a person's feelings of involvement and influence in a political system. Neimi, Craig, and Mattei (1991) referred to political efficacy as "one of the most theoretically important and frequently used" indicators of general political attitude (p. 1407). According to J. Miller McPherson, Susan Welch, and Cal Clark (1977), "political efficacy is an important concept in the analysis of American political behavior, having been used to explain a wide variety of political activities and attitudes" (p. 509). Kahne and Westheimer (2006) remarked that political efficacy (or an individual's sense that he or she can make a difference) has a significant effect on that person's civic participation (p. 289). It is therefore in the interest of scholars to measure and determine different levels of political efficacy among populations that they feel are disengaged from various areas of civic life.

Political efficacy itself is dichotomous, made up of two different levels — internal and external. Taken together, these two concepts develop a more holistic view of the way that individuals feel that they can influence the political landscape. Clark and Acock (1989) defined these two different levels of political efficacy: "internal efficacy" is "the perception that one has the requisite skills and resources to influence the political system," and "external efficacy" is "the perception that government institutions and elites are responsive to one's attempts to exert political influence" (p. 551). Pollock (1983) used the term "external political efficacy" (EPE) as a reference to "whether or not the individual perceives the political system as potentially responsive to popular demand" (p. 403). This is a "conceptually distinct" term from internal political efficacy (IPE), which "refers to the individual's perception of his or her own competence as a political actor, quite apart from his/her evaluations of the political system" (p. 403). Although EPE and

IPE are different and distinct measurements from one another, Pollock (1983), in his analysis of the behavioral correlation of the two, found that there is a "highly suggestive relationship between . . . measures of internal and external political efficacy" (p. 403).

Together, IPE and EPE create a measure of political efficacy which can be studied in its relationship with various demographic factors to measure the way that political efficacy is affected by different population factors. Studies in political efficacy have grown significantly in the study of who engages in the political system and why.

Political efficacy can be negatively influenced by a number of factors. Beaumont (2011) remarked that "discrepancies in the political resources . . . people acquire by virtue of socioeconomic status and personal background—political knowledge, experience, norms, and so on—often persist and compound over time, disempowering large segments of the population" and negatively affecting political efficacy in certain populations (p. 216). The racial makeup of populations is affected by different phenomena in response to growth or loss in political efficacy. Spence, McClerking, and Brown (2009), in their study of black political participation, claimed that factors like racial makeup of city councils and black mayors have a positive effect on political efficacy, although the effect of these factors diminished over time.

All of these factors being measured are indirect measures of internal and external political efficacy, and though they seem to relate to one another in a number of ways, this is not always the case, and some have little to no effect on one another. For instance, Rahn and Rudolph (2005) found that "contrary to expectations, trust in local government appears to be unrelated to civic engagement," claiming that those citizens that "engage in even large numbers of voluntary organizations are no more trusting than those that

remain uninvolved" (p. 548). Granted, this study included non-political measures of civic engagement, and the civic involvement questions included more than just voting and participation in local political groups. Nevertheless, it appears that those that are involved in a large number of volunteer organizations are not more likely to trust local politicians or local political institutions. Instead, it appears that education levels and socioeconomic status are greater indicators of political trust (Rahn & Rudolph, 2005). Furthermore, factors like demographic composition are also key in measuring perceptions of political competence — another factor of political efficacy — in the context of city size (Finifter & Abramson, 1975, p. 197; Oliver, 2000, p. 364).

Abilene, surrounded by rural communities, and approximately 1/10th the size of Dallas represents a rural metropolitan area, whose population is concentrated but still distinctly rural in identification and character. A comparison of Abilene to the urban metropolis of Dallas, Texas, is important for understanding the way that people in poverty are affected in their political trust, participation, and feelings of competence based on their location. Does Abilene's size make it easier for people in poverty to connect to local political organizations? Does it make it easier to vote in local elections? Does Abilene foster a culture where local persons in poverty feel heard or understood by their local politicians, or does the size of Dallas afford it a larger pool of resources for people in poverty to connect to local politics? Is city size key to formulating groups that can enact change, or at least, do the people in poverty view Dallas that way? This research looks into these questions by asking: How does political efficacy among people in poverty differ between a large, distinctly urban metropolitan area (Dallas), and a small, rural metropolitan area (Abilene)? Additionally, how does city size affect low-income

persons' feelings of political connectedness and whether or not they feel informed?

Rationale and Research Questions

The literature above raises questions regarding the connection between community and political efficacy. The goal of the present research was to study this relationship by analyzing differences in political efficacy among low-income populations in major, consolidated, or "Level A" metropolitan areas compared to "Level C" more rural metropolitan areas and will focus on two cities, Dallas, Texas (a major/consolidated/Level A metropolitan area) and Abilene, Texas (a Level C metropolitan area), to measure the differences in political efficacy between populations in poverty. The United States Census Bureau (2000), in the Geographic Areas Reference Manual (GARM), defines a metropolitan area as consisting of "one or more counties that contain a city of 50,000 or more inhabitants, or contain a Census Bureau-defined urbanized area (UA) and have a total population of at least 100,000" (p. 13-1). An area is classified as a consolidated metropolitan statistical area (CMSA) if it has a population of 1 million or more and is considered a Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA), which the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) defines as an MSA consisting "of a large urbanized county or a cluster of counties . . . that demonstrate strong internal economic and social links in addition to close ties with the central core of the larger area" (p. 13-2). Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas is designated by the United States Census Bureau as a PMSA and CMSA.

Metropolitan Areas are further designated by the US Census Bureau into a series of four Levels (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, p.13-7). "Level A" Metropolitan Areas have a population of 1 million or more, "Level B" areas contain populations between 250,000

and 999,000, “Level C” areas contain populations between 100,000 and 249,000, and “Level D” areas contain populations less than 100,000.

With its population over 1 million, Dallas itself is classified as a Major Metropolitan Area and Central City of the DFW CMSA, which the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) designates as a “Level A” MSA, meaning that the area has a population of one million or more (p. 13-7). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), a city is considered the “central city” of an MSA if it is designated as the largest city in the MSA (p. 13-8). Dallas, TX, with its estimated 2013 population of 1,257,676 is the only city in the DFW Metroplex with a population over 1 million, making it the central city of the DFW CMSA.

Abilene, Texas is a city two and a half hours west of the DFW Metroplex. It is the central city of the Abilene MSA, and with its estimated 2013 population of 120,099, it is designated by the U.S. Census Bureau as a “Level C” MSA (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015, p. 13-7). Similarly, it is the only city in the Abilene MSA; all other areas in the Abilene MSA have populations under 5,000 residents. Due to the large number of surrounding rural communities and lower populations, Abilene’s character, though it is a city, is distinctly rural.

A comparison of these two cities is beneficial for a couple of reasons. The first is it allows us to look at the way that two different sized metropolitan areas differ in the way that their low-income populations engage in the political system. Communication between local politicians in a large city like Dallas may be significantly different in its effectiveness at reaching out to these populations compared to a smaller city like Abilene, Texas. Another important thing to take into account is the geographical similarities

between these two cities. Separated by less than 200 miles, it would be noteworthy to measure the differences between two cities of significantly different sizes that are not in different parts of the state/country/world. Undoubtedly, a small city in New England would face different problems, challenges, and phenomena than a much larger city in the South, due to geographic separation as much as the demographic and size of the respective cities. Finding two cities so close to one another is a good way to measure the different challenges that two areas face based on their size, more so than the responsiveness of state governments, challenges due to climate differences, and other factors that may change the way that city governments and their constituents interact with one another. Comparing Abilene and Dallas opens up a research possibility that allows examination of two areas that are very different from one another, without sacrificing their similarities.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), Dallas, Texas experienced tremendous population growth between 2013 and 2014. The city of Dallas experienced the 8th largest numeric boost in population between 2013 and 2014, adding over 20,000 new residents in that year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). This means that a comparison of these two MSAs is beneficial because it analyzes different problems facing one of the largest and fastest growing cities in American (Dallas) compared to a city like Abilene, which is significantly smaller and whose population is growing less exponentially. Abilene, surrounded by rural communities, and approximately 1/10th the size of Dallas represents a rural metropolitan area, whose population is concentrated but still distinctly rural in identification and character. A comparison of Abilene to the urban metropolis of Dallas, Texas, is important for understanding the way that people in poverty are affected

in their political trust, participation, and feelings of competence based on their location. In other words, would community size indeed affect political participation? Thus, further analysis asks the differential effects of community size by comparing samples of respondents from Abilene with respondents from Dallas on measures of political efficacy on matters such as: Does Abilene's size compared with Dallas make it easier for people in poverty to connect to local political organizations? Does it make it easier to vote in local elections? Does Abilene foster a culture where local persons in poverty feel heard or understood by their local politicians, or does the size of Dallas afford it a larger pool of resources for people in poverty to connect to local politics? Is city size key to formulating groups that can enact change, or at least, do the people in poverty view Dallas that way? This research looks into these questions by asking: How does political efficacy among people in poverty differ between a large, distinctly urban metropolitan area (Dallas), and a small, rural metropolitan area (Abilene)? Additionally, how does city size affect low-income persons' feelings of political connectedness and whether or not they feel informed?

These types of questions are best assessed in scales designed to measure the conceptualizations that lie beneath the questions which typically refer to scales measuring political efficacy. Thus, the central research questions for this study ask the following:

RQ1: Does community size (comparing Abilene vs. Dallas) affect local political efficacy (as measured by EPE, IPE, and total efficacy) for low-income persons?

RQ2: Do perceptions of community size (whether a participant feels that their community is large or small) affect local political efficacy (as measured by EPE, IPE, and total efficacy) for low-income persons?

RQ3: Do perceptions of urbanization (whether a participant feels that their community is more rural or urban) affect local political efficacy (as measured by EPE, IPE, and total efficacy) for low-income persons?

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants included low-income residents from two different settings. The first group surveyed were urban residents of the Dallas area. These persons are currently located in Dallas and receive some level of public assistance from the city of Dallas, or some other form of low-income relief from Dallas-area nonprofits. The second participant sample was from Abilene, Texas: a much smaller MSA with a more rural character, and surrounding areas.

The search for a random sample has become more difficult over the last 15 years. Fowler (2014), in his reflection on the change in survey techniques, remarks that the decline of landlines and growth of the use of cell phones and the Internet has made traditional methods of response collection less reliable. He also remarks that Internet collection methods have failed to improve reliability or replace the hole being left by these changes in technology, and while the merits of Internet sampling are promising, at this point they make it difficult to achieve a random sampling of participants. This problem proves to be even more difficult when dealing with populations that may not have access to a landline, mailing address, or even a home. Door-to-door interviews become more difficult with populations that may be transient, difficult to trace and find, or otherwise unreachable.

The disenfranchising nature of poverty makes random sampling of the population

difficult because there is no sample frame or list of persons living in poverty from which to draw. The trouble of random sampling in less densely populated areas is documented by scholars including Mammen and Sano (2012), who in their research of economically disadvantaged rural mothers, found that "random selection of a study population is rarely a realistic option for researchers. Thus, studies of rural, low-income mothers most often have utilized some form of nonprobability sampling to recruit participants" (p. 464). Most notably, research into rural poverty focuses around "recruiting participants through community agencies such as welfare offices, Head Start or early Head Start, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), community clinics, and local health departments" (Mammen & Sano, 2012, p. 464).

When searching for suitable populations of urban poverty, researchers run into a similar problem. Lawless and Fox (2001), in their research of low-income populations in urban areas, found that "although [their] goal was to collect data from as varied a sample of this population as possible, several factors limited [their] random selection" including "most notably, in order to gain access to potential respondents, [they] found it necessary to work with community organizations and associations that serve the poor in various capacities" (p. 380). Research involving persons who may not have a home address, a telephone, or any means of reliable access besides their regular use of the services provided by a local organization, government service, or non-profit makes it difficult to engage in probability or random sampling, because there is no sample frame to choose participants from in the first place.

One method of sampling for vulnerable, underground, and difficult-to-reach populations is response driven sampling (RDS) which according to Mammen and Sano

(2012) is " a modified form of snowball sampling (which is itself a form of chain-referral sampling) [and] was developed to study 'hidden' populations that are hard to reach or at risk and for whom sampling frames are not available." This sampling procedure "has since been used successfully to study a variety of other urban and rural populations" (p. 470). The process uses "seeds" of persons that get in contact with one another — similar to a snowball sample — but then adjusts the weights of the sample population, meaning "bias resulting from using the initial nonrandom sample can be reduced by conducting RDS analysis, meant to weight the sample appropriately and verify the network connections as well as the reliability of this sampling technique" (p. 470). RDS is a modification of the method of chain referral sampling, which, when measuring populations that do not have sample frames, can be a more effective means of sampling than venue visitation (Harwood, Horvath, Courtenay-Quirk, Fisher, Kachur, McFarlane, & O'Leary, 2012).

Gaining access to these populations via common venues is an effective way to make contact with "hidden" populations, as Lawless and Fox (2001) found in their study of urban poor in New York City. According to Harwood and colleagues (2012), to compile a proper venue-based sample, it is important to include all possible venue types in a sample frame of the venues, when a sample frame of the respondents cannot be secured. This research sought out an *N* size of around 250 to minimize the probable deviation of the findings (Hocking, Stacks, & McDermott, 2003, p. 227).

Tables 1-7 show the descriptive statistics for the population. The total number of respondents was 117. The margin of error for the population size was 7 percent (Hocking,

Stacks, & McDermott, 2003, p. 227). Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for gender, made up of 57 males (48.72%) and 60 females (51.28%).

Table 1

Descriptives – Sex

	N	Valid Percent
Male	57	48.7
Female	60	51.3
Total	117	100

Table 2 shows the demographics for age of the population surveyed. Of the respondents, the median age of respondents was 47, with over half of the respondents being between the ages of 35 and 54.

Table 2

Descriptives – Age Groups

	N	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Under 24	6	6	6
25-34	16	16	22
35-44	23	23	45
45-54	33	33	78
55-64	19	19	97
65 and up	3	3	100
Total	100	100	

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for race. The racial makeup of the sample was 37.17% Black/African American, 1.77% American Indian, 17.7% Hispanic/Latino, 0.88% Asian, 4.42% Mixed Race, 34.51% Non-Hispanic White, and 1.77% classifying themselves as “Other.”

Table 3

Descriptives – Race

	N	Valid Percent
African American/Black	42	37.2
American Indian	2	1.8
Hispanic/Latino	20	17.7
Asian	1	0.9
Mixed Race	5	4.4
Non-Hispanic White	39	34.5
Prefer Not to Answer	2	1.8
Other	2	1.8
Total	113	100

Table 4 has the descriptive statistics for religion. Regarding religious preference, 70.48% identified as Protestant, 7.62% identified as Catholic, 1.9% as Jewish, 2.86% as Muslim, 3.81% as Buddhist, 5.71% identified as "Other," and 6.67% identified as having no religious preference. The sample's employment status had over 56.75% respondents that claimed to be "unemployed" or "temporarily unemployed."

Table 4

Descriptives – Religion

	N	Valid Percent
Protestant	74	70.5
Catholic	8	7.6
Jewish	2	1.9
Muslim	3	2.9
Buddhist	4	3.8
Other	6	5.7
None	7	6.7
Total	105	100

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for employment status. While some participants identified as working full time or working part time, and others (8.1%) identified as retired, a large proportion considered themselves unemployed (42.3%). Taken along with those that identified as temporarily not working (14.4%), the currently unemployed made up over half of the respondents.

Table 5

Descriptives – Employment Status

	N	Valid Percent
Working Full Time	13	11.7
Working Part Time	14	12.6
Temporarily Not Working	16	14.4
Unemployed	47	42.3
Student	4	3.6
Retired	9	8.1
Other	8	7.2
Total	111	100

Table 6 show the descriptive statistics for self-reported income. Over half of respondents reported that they make less than $5000 a year (53.8%), with over three quarters of respondents making $15000 a year or less (77.9%).

Table 7 shows the descriptive statistics for self-identified socioeconomic status. Respondents identified as lower class most often (48.6%) with a smaller number identifying as working class (13.5%), and even some identifying as middle class (13.5%).

Table 6

Descriptives – Income

	N	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Under $5000	56	53.8	53.8
$5000-$10000	15	14.4	68.3
$10001-$15000	10	9.6	77.9
$15001-$20000	6	5.8	83.7
$20001-$25000	8	7.7	91.3
$25001-$35000	5	4.8	96.2
$35001-$45000	2	1.9	98.1
Over $45000	2	1.9	100
Total	104	100	100

Table 7

Descriptives – Self-Identified SES

	N	Valid Percent
Lower Class	52	46.8
Working Class	42	37.8
Middle Class	15	13.5
Upper Class	2	1.8
Total	111	100

Measures

Political efficacy was measured using scales employed by Neimi, Craig, and Mattei (1990) and Craig, Niemi, and Silver (1990). The larger political efficacy scale is made up of two 4-item scales. One scale, tested by Craig, Niemi, and Mattei (1991), measures internal political efficacy (IPE), or an "individual's perception of his or her own competence as a political actor . . . apart from his/her evaluations of the political system (Pollock, 1983, p. 403).

The IPE scale is made up of 4 items. These include how informed a person feels about politics and government compared to most people ("I think that I am better informed about local politics and government than most people"), how qualified an individual feels to participate in local politics ("I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in local politics"), the level of understanding the respondent has about political issues facing his or her local area ("I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our community"), and whether or not a person feels that they could do as good of a job in public office as others ("I feel that I could do as good a job in local public office as most other people"). According to Craig, Niemi, and Silver (1990), this scale of internal efficacy "exhibits excellent reliability (alpha = 0.801)" (p. 292). The present study alpha of internal political efficacy will be revealed in section one of the next chapter.

The second scale measures external political efficacy (EPE), or "whether or not the individual perceives the political system as potentially responsive to popular demand" (Pollock, 1983, p. 403). The 4 items included in the EPE scale are measures of whether or not respondents feel that there are legal methods to successfully influence government ("There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the local government does"), whether or not people have the final say in how their government is run ("Under our form of local government, the people have the final say about how the community is run, no matter who is in office"), the responsiveness of public officials ("If local public officials are not interested in hearing what the people think, there is really no way to make them listen."), and whether or not the participant feels that people like him/herself have a say in the way government is run ("People like me don't have any say

about what the local government does"). The reliability of the 4 item external efficacy scale is not as high as the internal efficacy scale, but it is still 0.769 (Craig, Neimi, & Silver, 1990, p. 302). The present study alpha of external political efficacy will be revealed in section one of the next chapter.

Both the IPE scale and EPE scale were analyzed separately, but together they were compiled into an 8-item scale of political efficacy, meant to combine the two measurements of efficacy and create a comprehensive measurement of political efficacy that includes the individual's feelings that political institutions are responsive and that the individuals themselves are informed and empowered enough to participate in those political institutions. The alpha for total political efficacy will be revealed in section one of the next chapter.

The second part of this research determined whether or not participants feel as if their city size has a negative or positive effect on their participation in local government. This question was analyzed by measuring the scale of political efficacy against two questions about community size and perceptions of a community, namely whether or not the person feels that their community is too small or large ("How do you feel about the size of your community?"), and whether or not the respondent feels as if their community is more rural or urban (Would you describe your community as more rural [country-like] or urban [city-like]?).

The EPE, IPE, political efficacy scale, and community size scale were measured in relation to the participant's place of residence and were measured for their relationship with various demographics including age, race, and gender to determine the determinants of EPE, IPE, and TPE. Results measured the effects of city size and location on the

political efficacy and agency of persons in poverty, how much of an effect exists, as well as what were the strongest predictors of political efficacy.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Reliability of Scales

The scales of internal, external, and total political efficacy can be seen in Table 8. For the four-item internal political efficacy scale, the reliability was moderately high (Cronbach's alpha = .672), though not passed the generally accepted level (alpha = .700). However, when analyzing the scale with an item deleted, the internal political efficacy scale does not seem to improve its reliability when any of the four items are deleted, indicating that the scale is relatively reliable and cannot be improved by removing any items. When looking at the reliability of the external political efficacy scale, the scale itself shows remarkably high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .844). Removing any items from the scale only appears to decrease the reliability of the external political efficacy scale. When the two four item scales are put together into an 8-item scale of total political efficacy, the reliability of the total scale is well beyond the .70 threshold (Cronbach's alpha = .745).

Table 8

Political Efficacy Scale Reliability

Scale	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Total Political Efficacy (TPE)	8	0.84
External Political Efficacy (EPE)	4	0.67
Internal Political Efficacy (IPE)	4	0.75

Political Efficacy Based on City

First, the scales were analyzed to determine a difference of means between persons living in Abilene and those living in Dallas. Table 9 shows that comparison. There was no significant difference of means for external political efficacy, with the mean for the city of Dallas ($\bar{x}$ = 13.33) being only slightly higher than the mean for the city of Abilene ($\bar{x}$=12.61), and not significant (p = .35). The difference in IPE was a similar trend, with people in Dallas ($\bar{x}$ = 13.37) having a slightly higher mean than those of Abilene ($\bar{x}$ = 12.43), a mean difference that was also not statistically significant (p = .12). The final comparison of the two groups, under the TPE scale, also showed no significant difference, with Dallas participants having a slightly higher ($\bar{x}$ = 26.70) mean than participants from Abilene ($\bar{x}$ = 25.02). This difference of means was also not statistically significant (p = .12).

Table 9

Independent Samples t-Test of City

	City	Mean	*t*	*df*	Significance
EPE	Dallas	13.33	0.94	109	0.35
	Abilene	12.61			
IPE	Dallas	13.37	1.57	108	0.12
	Abilene	12.43			
TPE	Dallas	26.7	1.59	108	0.12
	Abilene	25.02			

Table 10 shows the comparison of the scales when efficacy was recoded Low/Hi (under the median is designated Low IPE/EPE/TPE while over the median is designated as High IPE/EPE/TPE). Chi-Square analysis was then used to determine if there was a significant difference between participants in Dallas and participants in Abilene. For

Low/Hi EPE, there was no significant difference (p = .327), with residents of Dallas and Abilene both having greater instances of higher than average EPE. For IPE, there was no significant difference either, and while participants of Abilene had greater numbers of Low IPE while Dallas participants had larger percentages of High IPE, this difference was not significant (p = .09). When chi-square analysis was used to determine a difference between Low/Hi TPE, there was also no significant difference between Dallas participants and Abilene participants, with both cities having greater instances of Hi TPE than Low TPE (p = .44).

Table 10

City Comparison of Efficacy (Low/Hi)

	City		Chi-Square	*df*	Significance
	Dallas	Abilene			
EPE			1.39	1	0.33
Low	28.1%	38.3%			
Hi	38.3%	61.7%			
IPE			3.21	1	0.09
Low	36.8%	53.3%			
Hi	63.2%	46.7%			
TPE			0.90	1	0.44
Low	31.6%	40.0%			
Hi	68.4%	60.0%			

Between the comparison of means for independent samples and the discriminant analysis comparing the Low/Hi political efficacy in relation to city, the data shows no significant relationship between city and political efficacy, indicating that there is not a significant difference between living in Abilene and living in Dallas in regards to one's political efficacy.

Political Efficacy and Perceptions of Community Size

Next, the perceptions of community size were measured against the political efficacy scales to determine whether or not there was a relationship about feelings of community size and political efficacy. Table 11 shows those results. There was no notable relationship between perceptions of community size and political efficacy. The analysis of variance within and among groups for EPE was not significant (p=.53), and this was the case for IPE (p=.24) and TPE (p=.98). What this shows is that a participant's feelings about whether or not their community was too big or too small had no significant effect on a participant's political efficacy.

Table 11

One-Way ANOVA of Perceptions of City Size and Political Efficacy

		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Significance
EPE	Between Groups	52.8	4	13.2	0.8	0.53
	Within Groups	1721.97	104	16.56		
	Total	1774.77	108			
IPE	Between Groups	56.12	4	14.03	1.41	0.24
	Within Groups	1038.56	104	9.99		
	Total	1094.68	108			
TPE	Between Groups	13.94	4	3.49	0.11	0.98
	Within Groups	3410.41	104	32.79		
	Total	3424.35	108			

Table 12 shows the analysis of differences between groups when political efficacy scales are recoded as Low/Hi. There does not appear to be a significant or measurable relationship between a participant's feelings about their community size and their levels of political efficacy. When measuring the comparison of perceptions of community size

and EPE, the difference was not significant (p=.35), and the relationship between community size and IPE was even less significant (p=.64). When analyzing the relationship between perceptions of community side and total political efficacy (TPE), the results were not significant, with a p value of 0.75.

Table 12

Perceptions of Community Size and Efficacy (Low/Hi)

	Perceptions of Community Size					Chi-Square	*df*	Sig.
	Way too small	A little too small	Perfect Size	A little too big	Way too big			
EPE						4.47	4	0.35
Low	2.6%	17.9%	48.7%	23.1%	17.7%			
Hi	6.8%	13.7%	50.7%	12.3%	16.4%			
IPE						2.55	4	0.64
Low	7.5%	17.0%	50.9%	11.3%	13.2%			
Hi	3.4%	13.6%	49.2%	20.3%	13.6%			
TPE						1.91	4	0.75
Low	7.1%	19.0%	47.6%	16.7%	9.5%			
Hi	4.3%	12.9%	51.4%	15.7%	15.7%			

Political Efficacy and Perceptions of Urbanism

Table 13 shows the analysis of perceptions of rural/urbanism and political efficacy. The difference between groups in EPE was not significant (p=0.9), indicating that there was not a significant difference between those that felt that their city was more urban/rural and their level of external political efficacy. The analysis of rural/urban perceptions and IPE were also not significant (p=.91), indicating that the perceptions of Dallas and Abilene as more rural or urban had no measurable relationship with a respondent's feelings of internal political efficacy. Lastly, when analyzing the relationship between urban/rural perceptions and total political efficacy (TPE), there did

not seem to be a significant variance between or within groups (p=.86), indicating that a participant's perceptions of whether or not their community was more urban or rural had no measurable relationship with their TPE.

Table 13

One-Way ANOVA of Rural/Urban and Political Efficacy

		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
EPE	Between Groups	17.84	4	4.46	0.27	0.9
	Within Groups	1655.2	99	16.72		
	Total	1673.04	103			
IPE	Between Groups	10.87	4	2.72	0.25	0.91
	Within Groups	1066.67	99	10.78		
	Total	1077.54	103			
TPE	Between Groups	43.18	4	10.79	0.33	0.86
	Within Groups	3280.33	99	33.14		
	Total	3323.5	103			

The relationship between rural/urban perceptions and political efficacy were then calculated using a recoded scale of IPE, EPE, and TPE as Low/Hi. Table 14 shows the results of that analysis. For EPE, there was not a significant difference between those that felt that their community was more rural/urban when it came to measures of political efficacy. The difference was not significant (p=.94). This was the same for IPE, which had a similar significance level (p=.93), and TPE, which had a significance level of p=0.8.

Table 14

Perceptions of Rural/Urbanism and Efficacy (Low/Hi)

	Perceptions of Community Size							Sig.
	Rural	Mostly Rural	Equally Urban and Rural	Mostly Urban	Urban	Chi-Square	*df*	
EPE						0.76	4	0.94
Low	8.10%	10.8%	35.1%	27.0%	18.9%			
Hi	4.30%	10.1%	37.7%	26.1%	21.7%			
IPE						0.84	4	0.93
Low	5.90%	11.8%	39.2%	25.5%	17.6%			
Hi	5.50%	9.1%	34.5%	27.3%	23.6%			
TPE						1.63	4	0.80
Low	7.50%	12.5%	32.5%	30.0%	17.5%			
Hi	4.50%	9.1%	39.4%	24.2%	22.7%			

Between the Analysis of Variance and the chi-square analysis on the relationship between perceptions of urban/rural community, there appears to be no significant relationship between a participant's feelings of political efficacy and their perceptions of the urban/rural nature of their respective communities.

Determinants of Political Efficacy

What factors have a significant effect on local political efficacy for low-income persons? If city and perceptions of urbanization/ruralization and community size have no significant effect on local political efficacy, what demographics and factors do have a significant relationship with local political efficacy? When analyzing the different demographic factors and their relationship with political efficacy, there were a couple of items that had a significant effect on the internal, external, and total political efficacy of low-income persons. These factors were race and religion.

Race

Table 15 shows an analysis of variance for race and political efficacy. Because some race categories had too small of an N-size for Post-Hoc analysis, race was recoded into a 4 item nominal variable made up of African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, Non-Hispanic White, and Other. There was a significant difference between groups when measuring political efficacy. This relationship was significant for EPE (p=0.01), IPE (p=0.05), and TPE (p=0.01).

Table 15

One-Way ANOVA of Race and Political Efficacy

		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig
EPE	Between Groups	170.39	3	56.80	3.79	0.01
	Within Groups	1605.47	107	15.00		
	Total	1775.86	110			
IPE	Between Groups	75.14	3	25.05	2.60	0.05
	Within Groups	1019.55	106	9.62		
	Total	1094.59	109			
TPE	Between Groups	360.74	3	120.25	4.16	0.01
	Within Groups	3063.63	106	28.90		
	Total	3424.37	109			

Table 16 shows post-hoc analysis for the difference of political efficacy based on the recoded race variable. LSD analysis between groups breaks down the difference between race groups. For EPE, the difference in means between African American and Non-Hispanic Whites was significant (p=0.03), with African Americans having a higher

mean for external political efficacy than Non-Hispanic Whites. For Hispanic/Latinos, there was a significant difference of means for both Non-Hispanic Whites (p=0.00) and "Other" (p=0.05), indicating that Hispanic/Latino respondents have significantly higher levels of political efficacy than both Non-Hispanic Whites and "Other."

When analyzing the difference between groups for IPE, the trends are similar. African Americans have significantly higher instances of internal political efficacy than both Non-Hispanic White (p=0.03) and "Other" (p=0.02); however, Hispanics/Latinos did not differ significantly from other groups in average IPE. Non-Hispanic Whites had significantly lower instances of IPE than African Americans (p=0.03), but there was not a significant difference in IPE between Non-Hispanic whites and Hispanic/Latinos or "Other."

The difference between groups for race and TPE indicated a couple of significant relationships. The first was the significant difference between African Americans and Non-Hispanic Whites (p=0.00), as well as the difference between African Americans and "Other" (p=0.03). African Americans tended to have higher levels of total political efficacy than both of these groups, but did not differ significantly from Hispanic/Latinos. Hispanic/Latinos had significantly higher instances of TPE than Non-Hispanic Whites (p=0.02) and "Other" (p=0.05). Non-Hispanic Whites had lower levels of TPE than both African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos, but did not differ significantly from "Other."

Overall, we can see that there is a significant relationship between race and political efficacy, with African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos having significantly higher instances of local political efficacy than Non-Hispanic Whites and "Other."

Table 16

Post-Hoc LSD Analysis of Race and Political Efficacy

Scale	Race		Mean	Mean Difference	Sig.
EPE	African American/Black ($\bar{x}$ = 13.60)	Hispanic/Latino	14.95	-1.35	0.22
		Non-Hispanic White	**11.62**	**1.98**	**0.03**
		Other	12.15	1.45	0.25
	Hispanic/Latino ($\bar{x}$ = 14.95)	African American/Black	13.60	1.34	0.22
		Non-Hispanic White	**11.62**	**3.33**	**0.00**
		Other	**12.15**	**2.79**	**0.05**
	Non-Hispanic White ($\bar{x}$ = 11.62)	**African American/Black**	**13.60**	**-1.98**	**0.03**
		Hispanic/Latino	14.95	**-3.33**	**0.00**
		Other	12.15	-0.54	0.67
	Other ($\bar{x}$ = 12.15)	African American/Black	13.60	-1.45	0.25
		Hispanic/Latino	**14.95**	**-2.79**	**0.05**
		Non-Hispanic White	11.62	0.54	0.67
IPE	African American/Black ($\bar{x}$ = 13.93)	Hispanic/Latino	12.58	1.35	0.12
		Non-Hispanic White	**12.38**	**1.54**	**0.03**
		Other	**12.15**	**-2.34**	**0.02**
	Hispanic/Latino ($\bar{x}$ = 12.58)	African American/Black	13.93	-1.35	0.12
		Non-Hispanic White	12.38	0.20	0.82
		Other	11.58	1.00	0.39
	Non-Hispanic White ($\bar{x}$ = 12.38)	**African American/Black**	**12.38**	**-1.54**	**0.03**
		Hispanic/Latino	12.58	-0.20	0.82
		Other	11.58	0.80	0.44
	Other ($\bar{x}$ = 11.58)	**African American/Black**	**13.93**	**-2.34**	**0.02**
		Hispanic/Latino	12.58	-1.00	0.39
		Non-Hispanic White	12.38	-0.80	0.44

Table 16 (continued)

		Race	Mean	Mean Difference	Sig.
TPE	African American/Black ($\bar{x}$ = 27.53)	Hispanic/Latino	27.53	0	1.00
		Non-Hispanic White	**24.00**	**3.53**	**0.00**
		Other	**23.58**	**3.94**	**0.03**
	Hispanic/Latino ($\bar{x}$ = 27.53)	African American/Black	27.53	0	1.00
		Non-Hispanic White	**24.00**	**3.53**	**0.02**
		Other	**23.58**	**-3.94**	**0.05**
	Non-Hispanic White ($\bar{x}$ = 24.00)	**African American/Black**	**27.53**	**-3.53**	**0.00**
		Hispanic/Latino	**27.53**	**-3.53**	**0.02**
		Other	23.58	0.42	0.82
	Other ($\bar{x}$ = 23.58)	**African American/Black**	27.53	**-3.94**	**0.03**
		Hispanic/Latino	**27.53**	**-3.94**	**0.05**
		Non-Hispanic White	24.00	-0.42	0.82

Religion

The second variable demonstrating a significant relationship with political efficacy was religion. Due to low instances of response in many of the response categories, post-hoc analysis could not be conducted, but Table 17 shows the religion variable recoded into a dummy variable for Protestantism. There is a significant difference of means between Protestants and non-Protestants (p = 0.05) for TPE, though there is not a significant difference between Protestants and non-Protestants for either EPE or IPE. It does appear that Protestants experience higher instances of total political efficacy than other religions, though this relationship loses significance when TPE is broken down into EPE and IPE.

Table 17

Independent Samples t-test Protestant

		Mean	*t*	*df*	Sig
EPE	Not Protestant	12	-1.81	109	0.07
	Protestant	13.45			
IPE	Not Protestant	12.44	-1.03	108	0.31
	Protestant	13.11			
TPE	Not Protestant	24.39	-1.92	108	0.05
	Protestant	26.56			

Age

Another variable with a significant relationship with political efficacy is age (shown in Table 18), which had a significant difference between groups for EPE (p = 0.02), though it did not seem to significantly affect either IPE or TPE.

Table 18

One-Way ANOVA of Age Groups and Political Efficacy

		Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
	Between Groups	237.24	5	47.45	3.01	0.02
EPE	Within Groups	1436.31	91	15.78		
	Total	1673.55	96			
	Between Groups	12.25	5	2.45	0.25	0.94
IPE	Within Groups	880.86	91	9.68		
	Total	893.11	96			
	Between Groups	245.41	5	49.08	1.61	0.17
TPE	Within Groups	2783.23	91	30.59		
	Total	3028.64	96			

Table 19 shows the post-hoc results when conducted on age groups in relation to EPE. There is a significant difference of means between 55-64 year olds and almost every other group, including 25-34 year olds (p = 0.01), 35-44 year olds (p = 0.00), and

45-54 year olds (p = 0.01). In all of these groups, 55-64 year olds had significantly higher levels of external political efficacy than other groups besides those that were in the highest and lowest age categories.

Table 19

Post-Hoc LSD Analysis of Age and Political Efficacy

Scale	Age		Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
EPE	Under 24 ($\bar{x}$ = 13.00)	25-34	11.81	1.19	1.90	0.53
		35-44	11.14	1.86	1.83	0.31
		45-54	12.63	0.38	1.77	0.83
		55-64	15.78	-2.78	1.87	0.14
		65 and up	12.67	0.33	2.81	0.91
	25-34 ($\bar{x}$ = 11.81)	Under 24	13.00	-1.19	1.90	0.53
		35-44	11.14	0.68	1.31	0.61
		45-54	12.63	-0.81	1.22	0.51
		55-64	**15.78**	**-3.97**	**1.37**	**0.01**
		65 and up	12.67	-0.85	2.50	0.73
	35-44 ($\bar{x}$ = 11.14)	Under 24	13.00	-1.86	1.83	0.31
		25-34	11.81	-0.68	1.31	0.61
		45-54	12.63	-1.49	1.10	0.18
		55-64	**15.78**	**-4.64**	**1.26**	**0.00**
		65 and up	12.67	-1.53	2.45	0.53
	45-54 ($\bar{x}$ = 12.63)	Under 24	13.00	-0.38	1.77	0.83
		25-34	11.81	0.81	1.22	0.51
		35-44	11.14	1.49	1.10	0.18
		55-64	**15.78**	**-3.15**	**1.17**	**0.01**
		65 and up	12.67	-0.04	2.40	0.99
	55-64 ($\bar{x}$ = 15.78)	Under 24	13.00	2.78	1.87	0.14
		25-34	**11.81**	**3.97**	**1.37**	**0.01**
		35-44	**11.14**	**4.64**	**1.26**	**0.00**
		45-54	**12.63**	**3.15**	**1.17**	**0.01**
		65 and up	12.67	3.11	2.48	0.21
	65 and up ($\bar{x}$=12.67)	Under 24	13.00	-0.33	2.81	0.91
		25-34	11.81	0.85	2.50	0.73
		35-44	11.14	1.53	2.45	0.53
		45-54	12.63	0.04	2.40	0.99
		55-64	15.78	-3.11	2.48	0.21

Table 19 (continued)

Scale	Age		Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
IPE	Under 24 ($\bar{x}$ = 12.17)	25-34	12.06	0.10	1.49	0.94
		35-44	12.95	-0.79	1.43	0.58
		45-54	12.78	-0.61	1.38	0.66
		55-64	12.67	-0.50	1.47	0.73
		65 and up	11.67	0.50	2.20	0.82
	25-34 ($\bar{x}$ = 12.06)	Under 24	12.17	-0.10	1.49	0.94
		35-44	12.95	-0.89	1.02	0.39
		45-54	12.78	-0.72	0.95	0.45
		55-64	12.67	-0.60	1.07	0.57
		65 and up	11.67	0.40	1.96	0.84
	35-44 ($\bar{x}$ = 12.95)	Under 24	12.17	0.79	1.43	0.58
		25-34	12.06	0.89	1.02	0.39
		45-54	12.78	0.17	0.86	0.84
		55-64	12.67	0.29	0.99	0.77
		65 and up	11.67	1.29	1.91	0.50
	45-54 ($\bar{x}$ = 12.78)	Under 24	12.17	0.61	1.38	0.66
		25-34	12.06	0.72	0.95	0.45
		35-44	12.95	-0.17	0.86	0.84
		55-64	12.67	0.11	0.92	0.90
		65 and up	11.67	1.11	1.88	0.55
	55-64 ($\bar{x}$ = 12.67)	Under 24	12.17	0.50	1.47	0.73
		25-34	12.06	0.60	1.07	0.57
		35-44	12.95	-0.29	0.99	0.77
		45-54	12.78	-0.11	0.92	0.90
		65 and up	11.67	1.00	1.94	0.61
	65 and up ($\bar{x}$ = 11.67)	Under 24	12.17	-0.50	2.20	0.82
		25-34	12.06	-0.40	1.96	0.84
		35-44	12.95	-1.29	1.91	0.50
		45-54	12.78	-1.11	1.88	0.55
		55-64	12.67	-1.00	1.94	0.61

Table 19 (continued)

Scale	Age		Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
TPE	Under 24 ($\bar{x}$ = 25.17)	25-34	23.88	1.29	2.65	0.63
		35-44	24.09	1.08	2.55	0.67
		45-54	25.41	-0.24	2.46	0.92
		55-64	28.44	-3.28	2.61	0.21
		65 and up	24.33	0.83	3.91	0.83
	25-34 ($\bar{x}$ = 23.88)	Under 24	25.17	-1.29	2.65	0.63
		35-44	24.09	-0.22	1.82	0.91
		45-54	25.41	-1.53	1.69	0.37
		55-64	**28.44**	**-4.57**	**1.90**	**0.02**
		65 and up	24.33	-0.46	3.48	0.90
	35-44 ($\bar{x}$ = 24.09)	Under 24	25.17	-1.08	2.55	0.67
		25-34	23.88	0.22	1.82	0.91
		45-54	25.41	-1.32	1.53	0.39
		55-64	**28.44**	**-4.35**	**1.76**	**0.02**
		65 and up	24.33	-0.24	3.40	0.94
	45-54 ($\bar{x}$ = 25.41)	Under 24	25.17	0.24	2.46	0.92
		25-34	23.88	1.53	1.69	0.37
		35-44	24.09	1.32	1.53	0.39
		55-64	**28.44**	**-3.04**	**1.63**	**0.07**
		65 and up	24.33	1.07	3.34	0.75
	55-64 ($\bar{x}$ = 28.44)	Under 24	25.17	3.28	2.61	0.21
		25-34	**23.88**	**4.57**	**1.90**	**0.02**
		35-44	**24.09**	**4.35**	**1.76**	**0.02**
		45-54	25.41	3.04	1.63	0.07
		65 and up	24.33	4.11	3.45	0.24
	65 and up ($\bar{x}$ = 24.33)	Under 24	25.17	-0.83	3.91	0.83
		25-34	23.88	0.46	3.48	0.90
		35-44	24.09	0.24	3.40	0.94
		45-54	25.41	-1.07	3.34	0.75
		55-64	28.44	-4.11	3.45	0.24

Regression Modeling for Determinants of Political Efficacy

After analyzing the different demographic factors and their relationship with political efficacy, variables were input into linear regression with EPE, IPE, and TPE to determine the determinants of IPE, EPE, and TPE. The variables of City, perceptions of

rural/urbanism, and perceptions of city size were included as well.

Interval demographic data was input and measured alongside EPE, IPE, and TPE to determine the effect of certain factors such as religious attendance, age, income, and SES on different levels of political efficacy, and while there was not a significantly reliable model for either IPE or TPE, the external political efficacy model showed significance in explaining some influences on political efficacy from these variables (p=0.05).

Backward step linear regression was conducted to evaluate the prediction of various interval/ordinal demographic factors on political efficacy. The results are shown in Table 20. This model had an R-Square value of 0.15, indicating that the regression model accounted for 15% of political efficacy. The variables that showed the greatest weight in determining political efficacy were income (β= -0.20) – with persons making more amounts of money displaying lower instances of EPE (p=0.03) – and age (β= 0.22), with older respondents having lower levels of EPE (p=0.04).

Table 20

Backwards Step Linear Regression Standardized Coefficients for EPE

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Community Size	-0.04				
Urban/Rural	0.96	0.22			
Religious Attendance	-0.15	-0.14	-0.15		
SES	0.17	0.16	0.16	0.17	
Income	-0.25*	-0.24*	-0.23*	-0.24*	-0.20
Age	0.22	0.22	0.23*	0.18	0.22*
Constant	10.13***	9.69***	10.90***	9.78***	10.75***
Standard Error	2.71	2.41	1.99	1.82	1.72
R Square	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.12	0.90
F	2.18**	2.62**	3.08**	3.47**	3.97**

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

Regression shows that income and age are the best predictors of political efficacy, specifically external political efficacy. Model 5 is the clearest example of this. When removing all other variables, income (β= -0.20) and age (β= -0.23) have the highest and most statistically significant weights for predicting EPE. The model also indicates that urbanization/ruralization and perceptions of community size are not potent predictors of political efficacy, due to their low beta and elimination from later regression models.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The results indicate a couple of different patterns. The first apparent conclusions are the lack of significant difference between Abilene and Dallas residents in their political efficacy. What this means is that there does not seem to be a relationship between city and political efficacy. The difference between Level A MSA's and Level C's does not seem to be there. Though the difference in these two cities may be a difference in the number of resources or direct immediacy of local political institutions and politicians, there seems to be a threshold of resources necessary that indicate higher levels of political efficacy, and it appears that both Abilene and Dallas, Texas meet that threshold, indicating that there is not a significant difference between the two groups and their levels of political efficacy.

Similar to the lack of relationship demographically between Abilene and Dallas, there also does not appear to be a significant relationship between the level of urbanization/ruralization and political efficacy. Perceptions of urbanization do not seem to have an effect on the levels of political efficacy for low-income persons. What this means is that there does not seem to be a measurable difference between people that feel that their community is more "country-like" or "city-like," and their feelings of internal, external, and total political efficacy. Groups that felt that they lived in an urban area did not vary significantly from those that felt that their community was more rural.

This lack of relationship between urbanity and rurality was also reflected in the perceptions of community size. There did not appear to be a significant relationship between how big a respondent felt that their community was and their levels of political efficacy. This meant that if a resident of Dallas felt that their community was too big or too small, it did not have a measurable effect on their political efficacy. However, there seem to be a couple of demographic factors that do have a measurable relationship with political efficacy.

The first factor with a significant relationship with political efficacy is race. African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos both had measurably larger instances of internal, external, and total political efficacy than Non-Hispanic Whites and "Other." This is interesting, especially within the parameters of low-income respondents, because it indicates that these communities feel more politically connected compared to their Non-Hispanic White counterparts.

This relationship could be a result of social service organizations and social institutions offered to African Americans and Hispanics that Non-Hispanic Whites don't have as much access to, such as politically active Black Protestant churches and race advocacy groups. Low-income Non-Hispanic Whites may have less access to these social institutions, and lacking the networks provided to middle or high income Non-Hispanic Whites, may lack access to the institutions that would make them feel more efficacious. This explanation could apply to the "Other" category as well. In the south, Asian Americans, American Indians, and other groups do not have the same population sizes as larger ethnic groups, and may lack access to cohesive community programs and institutions that the larger ethnic groups can create.

External political efficacy is the more robust driver, showing stronger relationships with the various demographic indicators than IPE, though this relationship accumulated in TPE as well. EPE was also a more reliable measure than IPE, and tended to have stronger differences between groups. Religion proved to be a pretty strong predictor of political efficacy, though mostly for Protestants, which displayed higher instances of political efficacy than non-Protestants, specifically for external political efficacy and total political efficacy. What this indicates is that Protestants feel more capable of affecting their political system than non-Protestants, and this higher level of external efficacy makes them feel more influential and involved in the political process overall than other religious groups. This trend also points to EPE as the main driver of TPE demographically, because religious affiliation did not have a significant relationship with a person's feeling of personal qualification to engage in the political process, it only had a relationship with their perceived ability to access the structures of local politics and change them from their current position.

Age also had a significant relationship with efficacy, though this relationship, like that of Protestantism, was driven primarily by EPE, and did not have any significance with IPE or even a total measure of political efficacy. What this means is that 45-54 year olds were the most disillusioned with the political system compared to other groups, believing that the structures of politics were not influenced by their actions or the electoral process. Other groups had higher levels of external political efficacy, including young (Under 24) and older (65 and up) participants, indicating that they feel that they have more access to the political system, and that the political system is capable of

change, while decision-making remains in the hands of the electorate, even if that electorate is low-income.

Diffusion of Innovation

The displayed results tell us a number of things about political efficacy and the role of the city in politics. First, the role of communities in diffusion of innovations shows the importance of political structures and communities towards fostering this innovation. Political efficacy for low-income African Americans and Hispanics was significantly higher than low-income Non-Hispanic Whites. This may be a result of strong institutions that encourage the diffusion of ideas among their population. The central role that institutions play in the lives of low-income populations of color may have something to do with the larger instances of political efficacy. African American community leaders may use social service organizations like non-profits and Black churches to encourage constituents to exercise their political rights. Hispanic/Latinos may have more access to social justice organizations such as immigrant rights/Hispanic rights organizations. These ethnicity specific organizations are not necessarily available to low-income Non-Hispanic White persons, who also lack access to the social organizations available to middle- and high-income Non-Hispanic White persons. Therefore, Non-Hispanic Whites may lack access to networks that encourage local political engagement.

This application of diffusion may apply to religious groups as well. For Protestants (especially evangelicals), engagement in local political systems may be encouraged by church leaders and even other church members. The heterogeneous makeup of evangelical Protestant denominations may exhibit a level of heterophily that encourages diffusion and activism within local political institutions and electoral politics.

This differs from non-Protestant religious groups which may have less present and active religious organizations to plug into, especially for individuals that don't attend some sort of religious organization regularly. This influence from community leaders within the church and influence of heterophilous members would be something that those without a religious affiliation would have to find elsewhere, something that may be difficult for low-income persons. In that way, the political engagement of Evangelical Protestants matched with the encouraged diffusion within religious institutions may be the reason that Protestants are more externally politically efficacious, with a belief that the structures of power can change and produce new and better policies.

Rethinking Classical Theories of Urbanization

The inability to find a significant difference in political efficacy calls us to rethink the way that we view the social phenomenon of urbanization and its effect on the political activity and access of its constituents. It appears that the growth of the city has a different effect on the political efficacy of its constituents than urban theory would suggest.

Anomie

The concept of anomie does not seem to manifest itself based on the growth of social institutions like the city. The larger city does not seem to increase anomie or disconnection, at least within the local political realm. It appears that the structural differences between cities is not the only thing that does not indicate a measurable difference in anomie, but even perceptions of city size or different levels of urbanization don't seem to increase disconnection from the local political sphere.

The political efficacy of a low-income person does not show a relationship to what city they live in, or how big that they feel that city is. Similarly, how urban or rural

a participant feels that their community is does not seem to correlate with their feelings of political efficacy. The argument that increased mechanization and institutionalization has a negative effect on an individual's personal feelings of social connection does not seem to manifest itself in political engagement.

Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft

The results of city and political reaffirm the argument made by Christenson (1984) that the concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft are a continuum, rather than a binary. The effects of community and institutional size is not a black and white comparison between two different entities, but rather, the groups both experience aspects of Gesellschaft present in the conceptualization of interactions between individuals and ecological institutions such as those found in the city. This could be the reason that it was difficult to measure a difference between the two cities, because, in fact, dividing the two groups in a binary system is an inherently simplistic view of Tönnies' concept of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. It does not take into account the complicated relationship that factors into the differences and similarities of two distinct communities.

Another interpretation of the results and their relation to the theory of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft is that they affirm Bell's (1992) assertion that the differentiation between more rural and more urban areas is not important enough to study, claiming that many of the differences between the two do not hold relevance today. It seems rash to insist that there is no role for analyzing the impact that urbanization has on social phenomena like political efficacy, especially since these results only compare two designated MSAs and their variation in perceptions of urbanism, rather than comparing a strictly urban area to a strictly rural area. A better interpretation is to

treat the concept of urbanization as a complex interaction between population demographics, change, and cultural shifts. Making the argument that something is strictly urban or rural rejects the nuanced view that urbanization is a process with a number of interrelated parts that interact along a continuous line between ruralization and urbanization.

Mechanical and Organic Solidarity

Similar to the theories of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, the results and their application of mechanical and organic solidarity call us to analyze the role of the city and urbanization in a more nuanced way than we have in the past. Analyzing two cities and finding that they don't differ much on their levels of political efficacy, even when measuring the perceptions of community size, seems to indicate that there is a threshold in social interaction that we breach where our interactions with others and our interactions with social institutions like the political system breach mechanical solidarity and move into organic solidarity. It is not clear from these results at what point that threshold is breached, but it would appear that Abilene and Dallas don't seem to differ significantly in the social relations between low-income persons and their local political institutions. When this is combined with the perceptions of size results, it appears that both groups experience organic solidarity, regardless of their perceptions of their community size.

On the other hand, this shift to organic solidarity may not be apparent to low-income persons. When we take into account the urban/rural distinction and political efficacy, there does not seem to be a significant relationship. Low-income persons' levels of political efficacy don't seem to shift based on how urban or rural they feel that their

community is, indicating that they are not aware of the shift in institutional relationships that occur when a community transitions from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity.

A New Approach to Evaluating Urban Connection

Taking into account the application of the current research to theories of diffusion and innovation, it is important to evaluate these theories in a way that synthesizes their meaning and ensures their relevance today in an increasingly urbanized world. With this increase in the prominence and presence of the city, we will see an increase in the prominence and presence of structures and institutions (specifically those that thrive and grow in urban contexts), and it is important to recognize the role that those structures as well as their various components play in relieving or intensifying inequality and marginalization. If Diffusion is a key component of adopting ideas that improve a group's social, political, or economic position, it is important for that diffusion to encourage the adoption of those innovations that do lessen inequality, and diffusion through organizations and social structures is an important aspect of relieving inequality.

The importance of Diffusion through social structures requires us to analyze and interrogate the role that those structures play in society to encourage or discourage that Diffusion. When the world continues to concentrate itself into cities, it is vital that those cities and the structures within them encourage that diffusion; however, as analysis of classical urbanization theories shows through this research, the role of the city is not a dichotomy, and the size and differences of cities cannot be reduced to the concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft or Mechanical and Organic Solidarity as binaries. Instead, to analyze the role that these structures play in diffusing innovation among their populations, it is important to recognize these theories as existing on a continuum that

flow in their assistance (or lack thereof).

The city and its effect on a person's feelings of efficacy is not binary, but continuous. Similarly, its effect cannot be attributed to a singular characteristic of the structure of the city. Instead, the city and its various institutions influence its constituents in a variety of ways. The interaction of demographics and different phenomena such as race, religion, income, and self-described socioeconomic status all work with one another to increase or mitigate the influence of the city on the political efficacy of populations. This is especially the case for marginalized populations, which rely on various levels of social interactions and networks to access efficacy. These may include churches and other groups that encourage cohesion and contribute to the efficacy of an individual. The idea of "strength in numbers" is something that results not simply from the presence or absence of a dense and concentrated population, but from the way that concentration interacts with various levels of social organization other than simply "living in the city."

This seems to fit with Spence, McClerking, and Brown's (2009) analysis of the importance of black mayors in cities with larger populations of African American/Black constituents in developing and improving political efficacy in those communities. Things like racial solidarity, especially through social organizations like Black Protestant churches work in tandem with the demographic concentrations of the city to increase the social ties of a constituent. Social ties increase political efficacy, especially among traditionally marginalized groups, like African Americans and low-income persons. However, having social ties through group identification (like religious affiliation and race) becomes an interrelated factor with the ability to locate and participate in those various groups, something that the population concentration of the city improves.

A marginalized population dispersed over large areas is only further mitigated by that lack of access to various social networks. Lack of access to transportation (private or public) and time makes the city a vital and fostering environment for community and self-advocacy. While this solidarity may become more organic, as people can no longer form the voluntary organization in these large groups that they had in smaller groups, the tradeoff is a larger resource pool to gain that community from, more community leaders, and a sense of belonging to a large and powerful group. The city, though it may produce cultures of Gesselschaft, uses its sheer size and concentration to interact with groups and improve access issues that may not be available outside of the city.

Limitations and Future Research

A number of limitations in this research can be remedied by future projects and studies of this phenomenon. This research had limits with the sample frame, the sampling, as well as the scope of the research question and the reliability of the IPE scale.

The first limitation is that of the sample population. This research only analyzed low-income persons, not the general population. This parameterized population was intentional to study the effect of city, perceptions of city size, and perceptions of urbanization on the political efficacy of low-income persons. Still, these results cannot be generalized to the population of either of these cities. Similarly, the limit to just two MSAs in the same state is a limitation of the research. More comprehensive and latitudinal research over a number of different urban communities may be a good way to determine the generalizability of the findings.

Another limitation of the research is the construction of the IPE scale. The scale had lower reliability than that of EPE or the TPE scale. This could be a result of a number

of different problems, but one could be that the wording of questions does not take into account the educational or reading level of some low-income participants, that may have been confused or overwhelmed by the wording of the questions. Future research should focus on developing a scale that more reliably measures marginalized populations, such as those in poverty.

A third limitation was the lack of a survey distributed in Spanish. This was due to language proficiency and budgetary restrictions, and though it did not become a significant problem in surveying local participants, it may provide an explanation for the lower levels of Hispanic/Latino response.

The biggest gap that this research presents is the measurement of the rural urban divide and political efficacy. Though this research did look at two different categories of city and analyzed different perceptions of urbanization/ruralization in those areas, it did not collect any data from actual rural areas. Future research should look into ways to access rural poor populations and how their political efficacy differs from that of the urban poor.

Conclusions

The role of the city and urbanization in the diffusion of political power to marginalized persons is still an important subject of study. The way that low-income and minority constituents interact with their politicians is largely dependent on their own perceptions that the electoral system produces change, and that the change it produces is beneficial to those constituents. Politicians can improve this communication structure by seeing the way that the environment in which these groups live alters or affects that structure.

The question of the role in the city and the local political decision-making process is far from answered. As our world grows increasingly more urbanized and dependent on the institutions inherent in city life, studying those institutions and the benefit or cost that they provide to the citizens of that city is important to make those institutions better. At the same time, while some areas grow increasingly urbanized, it is also important to study the institutions of those that are excluded from this urbanization process (whether that exclusion is voluntary or not). In the end, the role of our environment in shaping our own positions in society is a worthy and engaging subject of study.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

September 21, 2015

Mr. Dylan Brugman
Department of Communication and Sociology
ACU Box 28156
Abilene Christian University

Dear Mr. Brugman,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "The Interaction of Community Size and Perceived Local Political Efficacy Among Low-Income Individuals" was approved on 09/21/2015 for a period of one year (IRB # 15-061). The expiration date for this study is 09/21/2016. If you intend to continue the study beyond this date, please submit the Continuing Review Form at least 30 days, but no more than 45 days, prior to the expiration date. Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form.

If you wish to make **any** changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Cc: Dr. Carley Dodd

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

To Whom It May Concern,

The purpose of this study is to determine how low-income persons feel about politics and their own role in the political process in Dallas and Abilene, TX. Participants will being asked a series of questions on the feelings they have about their own power within the local political system.

Participants must be aged 18 or older. Participants under the age of 18 will not be interviewed. By signing below, you agree to participate in survey, and you agree to your responses being recorded and used for research purposes. Although there is no reasonable risk to your person for participating in the study, some questions may produce a level of mental discomfort. This is unlikely, but possible, and you may refuse to answer any questions and stop completing the survey at any time.

No attempt will be made to identify you by name through your responses to the questions and you will never be asked for information that would allow anybody to identify you personally, though you may be asked for your age, race, and gender. The original survey responses will be accessible only by the principal researcher. Your survey will be collected and stored, but the survey responses will be physically locked and protected by computer password. These responses will be accessible only by the principal researcher. Your individual responses will be kept confidential and will not be shared with others.

You should not expect to receive any payment or other reward for your participation in the research. You may stop the survey at any time, withdraw your consent, or refuse to answer any questions without intimidation. You may also contact the researcher at any time after the survey with any questions that you may have about the survey, process, or research.

Questions about the research, your rights as a participant, or anything else can be forwarded to **Dylan Brugman** via phone at (**325) 674-2292** or via email **dab10a@acu.edu.** You may also contact the **ACU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs** via email at **orsp@acu.edu,** or via phone at (**325) 674-2285.**

By signing, you agree that you are 18 years or older, understand and accept the risks involved in your participation, and agree to participate and have your responses recorded and used

Printed Name: _____
Signature:_____
Date:_____

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT SURVEY

The following are a list of questions and responses regarding your feelings about political participation and your local government. The term "local government" includes all elected officials of your local community (city, town, or county). Some examples of local government officials include your city council, mayor, and school board. You should not include your thoughts about not elected (appointed) authorities (police, government workers, etc.), nor should you include national government officials (your Senator, Congressional Representative, the President, etc.). There are no right or wrong answers, and your responses will be kept confidential (meaning that nobody will be able to identify you based on your responses).

1. Do you consent to participate in this survey and agree to have your answers included in the study?

a. Yes b. No

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:

2. "There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the local government does." (LEGAL)

a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Neutral/Don't Know d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

3. "Under our form of local government, the people have the final say about how the community is run, no matter who is in office" (FINALSAY)

a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Neutral/Don't Know d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

4. "If local public officials are not interested in hearing what the people think, there is really no way to make them listen." (MAKELSTN) **

a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Neutral/Don't Know d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

5. "People like me don't have any say about what the local government does." (NOSAY) **

a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Neutral/Don't Know d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

6."I think that I am better informed about local politics and government than most people" (INFORMED)

a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Neutral/Don't Know d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

7. "I feel that I could do as good a job in local public office as most other people" (PUBOFF)

a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Neutral/Don't Know d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

8. "I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in local politics" (SELFQUAL)

a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Neutral/Don't Know d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

9. "I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our community" (UNDERSTAND)

a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Neutral/Don't Know d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

10. Would you describe your community as more rural (country-like) or urban (city-like)?

a. Urban b. Mostly urban c. Equally urban and rural d. Mostly rural
e. Rural

11. How do you feel about the size of your community?

a. Way too big b. A little too big c. Perfect size d. A little too small
e. Way too small

****Please flip paper over to complete the survey*****

12. What is your sex?

a. Male b. Female c. Other/Prefer not to answer

13. What year were you born?

_____

14. What socioeconomic class would you consider yourself?

a. Upper Class b. Middle Class c. Working Class d. Lower Class

15. What is your employment status?

a. Working full-time
b. Working part-time
c. Temporarily not working
d. Unemployed
e. Retired
f. Student
h. Other

16. What is your race?

a. Black or African American
b. American Indian
c. Hispanic/Latino
d. Asian
e. Mixed race/More than one racial heritage
f. Non-Hispanic White
g. Prefer not to answer
h. Other _____

17. What is your religious preference?

a. Protestant
b. Catholic
c. Jewish
d. Muslim
e. Buddhist
f. Hindu
e. Other _____
f. None

18. How often do you attend religious services?

a. Never
b. Less than once a year
c. Once or twice a year
d. Several times a year
e. Once a month
f. 2-3 times a month
g. About weekly
h. Weekly
i. Several times a week

19. How many people (including yourself) are in your household?

_____

20. What is your yearly household income before taxes?

a. Under $5,000
b. $5,000-$10,000
c. $10,001-$15,000
d. $15,001-$20,000
e. $20,001-$25,000
f. $25,001-$35,000
g. $35,001-$45,000
h. Over $45,000